

A Week at Kripalu:

Navigating a New World

Last fall, the National Parkinson Foundation sponsored the first-ever yoga retreat, “Navigating a New World: Wellness Retreat for Recently Diagnosed Parkinson’s Patients & Their Care Partners” at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in the Berkshire mountains of Massachusetts. This four and a half day program was designed for people in the early stages of Parkinson’s disease and encouraged them to take charge of their health and learn from leading medical and holistic professionals.

Over sixty people attended this retreat—the newly diagnosed brought along family, friends and care partners. Each day offered a combination of educational sessions, taught by the country’s foremost movement disorder neurologists and Parkinson’s specialists, and experiential workshops on the benefit of meditation, yoga and conscious communication taught by senior Kripalu faculty.

“Kripalu is a magical place. It gives you a break from the daily norm and allows you the unique opportunity to connect with others facing the same challenges from Parkinson’s. This is where people begin to create a community and support system,” explained NPF’s president and CEO, Joyce Oberdorf.

One of the highlights of the program was the daily “Let Your Yoga Dance for Parkinson’s” session with Megha Nancy Buttenheim. Buttenheim had everyone dancing to the beat with user-friendly moves that integrated breath and freestyle movements.



Emily Stamos, one of the retreat attendees commented on her experience,

“My experience at the Kripalu Yoga Retreat was life-altering. I was newly diagnosed with PD and had many questions. During the week, I learned everything I needed to know, from the importance of exercise to the benefits of meditation to helpful advice on lifestyle adjustments to information on current research and studies.”

Stamos also shared, “Mainly, it was wonderful to spend the week with my two daughters and for the three of us to be a part of a positive, healing community in such a beautiful setting. Since my return, I practice daily some aspect of the newly gained knowledge and advice. Thanks to Kripalu staff and the National Parkinson Foundation staff for being so accessible to us and providing this opportunity. It was GREAT!”

On the last day of the program, it was clear that a close-knit community had formed. The group shared their feelings about the week: energetic, optimistic, empowered, encouraged and informed. Many of the participants felt that they were now able to take better care of themselves and their families through the practice of yoga, meditation and healthy eating. The Kripalu faculty reminded us that the changes we desire cannot happen all at once; rather, we must look at ourselves as a work in progress and focus on incremental changes that we can make each day.

The next yoga retreat will be offered October 31 through November 4, 2011. Please call 1-800-4PD-INFO for more information.

To watch a video of Kripalu participants in a session of “Let Your Yoga Dance” visit, www.parkinson.org/retreat.